

# HERITAGE

BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM • PROVIDENCE COLLEGE • SPRING 2018

# THE HERITAGE JOURNAL

Spring 2018

The Heritage Journal is a biannual newsletter for the Black Studies Program at Providence College. We invite our scholarly community—students, faculty, staff, alum and community members to contribute to Heritage. Pieces can take multiple forms such as art, poetry or prose; they can be reflective or analytical.

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Heritage, Spring 2018 issue.*

# Heritage Journal, Spring 2018

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# Letter from the Editor

*Edmicelly Xavier, 2016-2018 Graduate Assistant*



Greetings Readers,

Serving as the Graduate Assistant for the Black Studies Program this year in particular has been my haven for healing. As you will discover through reading the writings that follow, our theme for this year was *Dearly Beloved*. As such, portraits of victims to police brutality were hung in my office throughout the year. These victims resemble the students that I teach on the south-side of Providence every day. *Dearly Beloved* became my haven for healing because even after a long day of work as a Providence High School teacher, by being a part of this work that Dr. Julia Jordan-Zachery is so passionate about and by looking into the eyes and faces of the victims that surround my office, I became strengthened and motivated to not only defeat the odds that are before me as an urban school teacher and as a woman of color, but also to inspire my students to beat the odds that are before them.

There are several people who I would like to thank. First, I would like to thank you, the reader, for supporting the Black Studies Program and for taking the time to read the *Heritage Journal*. Second, I would like to thank the authors and artists for their poignant pieces. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Jordan-Zachery for the sweat and tears that she has poured into the Black Studies Program; for her unwavering support and dedication to her students, colleagues, and to me; for always asking me “how are you doing?” and truly meaning it; and for steadfastly embodying a beacon of hope and justice throughout the Providence College campus.

Sincerely,

Edmicelly S. Xavier

# Note from the Director

*Julia Jordan-Zachery, Director and Professor of Public and Community Service*



## **Dearly Beloved vs. The Beloved Community**

Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke of The Beloved Community and since his daughter's recent visit to Providence College this has become somewhat of the mantra for the institution. But what does the Beloved Community look like?

As articulated by The King Center, the memorial institution founded by Coretta Scott King,

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

So can we ever get to a place of The Beloved Community without discussing, explicitly racism and particularly anti-Blackness and the violence that results? The Beloved Community stands on two pillars resistance to racism and justice. Yet here we are in a place where Black folk remain targeted by state and quasi-state structural violence. We are murdered and often without consequence. We are profiled and often without consequence. White ethnic colleagues target faculty of color and often without consequence. Students in some departments face systemic racism and often those who engage such violence face no consequence. Yet, there is this discourse of The Beloved Community.

The praxis of the Beloved Community is missing. This is where the project of Dearly Beloved is important. Dearly Beloved is but one tool that can be used to move from rhetoric to action. Dearly Beloved, started by Viviane Selah-Hanna and me, is a quilting project that seeks to memorialize those killed by state and quasi-state violence. We conceptualized this project after the murder of Trayvon Martin was found not guilty. We are two Black mothering academics who, like many others mourned the death of this child Trayvon Martin, and the countless others who were murdered because they were people of color.

This project gathers women of color, to not simply stitch the patches that make up the quilt, but to offer a communal space for healing. This is our attempt to resist the official narratives of death that are often used to control and define Blackness and the "Other." *Dearly Beloved* is part of my larger attempt to create a community for Black women, where we not only address our traumas, but find healing—soul healing. But it is also a project that speaks to racism and justice.

We have to confront "New England liberalism" of justice and equity that appears in theory but not necessarily practice. As such, we need to deeply deconstruct the ethos of the structures that result in Black death. This requires that we shake up power structures in a substantive way. This means that we have to talk about power—power that is rested in whiteness. We have to speak of social justice and not simply diversity. We have to speak of how we value humanity across differences—then we will get to a place of A Dearly Beloved Community.

# Slave Speaks to Chain

*Kingsley Metelus and Hannah Parker*

I  
noticed how smoothly you dragged bodies  
How  
you splintered our hands like crucifix  
And  
coiled our ankles like vines  
I  
still remember how cold that boat was  
How  
Mother Nature rocked our bodies as the waves chipped wood

How  
our bodies became a tight pack hymn  
Like  
maybe we could sing our bodies into salvation  
maybe  
we could beg to be one with earth again  
I  
mean the ocean is supposed to sustain wildlife, and I ain't nothing Normal  
These  
shackles dun made me slave  
Dun  
morphed my body into silhouettes of silence

The  
ocean sliced at our skin  
Made  
goosebumps rise above sea level  
Our  
blood circulated through hinges  
While  
the children lost breath  
How

dare you keep us captive  
To  
be the anchors of your ship  
To  
use our backbones to support anything but us  
You  
soaked our blood dry  
I  
guess this is how it feels to be a raisin in the sun  
To  
have our blackness shrivel through peaks of sunlight, and in sights of whips

I've  
always wondered what it would feel like to be on the opposing end  
Like  
what if we learned to hold you instead?  
What  
if we dragged you out of our continent?  
Like  
what if you learned to be anchors too?  
To  
drown in the depths of our black seas

Don't  
you know that we be chains too?  
That  
we coil arms when we feel threatened.  
Don't  
you know that we're used to being tied together?  
Have  
you not looked at the trees?  
You  
think rusty metal compares to bloody rope?  
You  
haven't noticed the way our blood fertilizes these roots ?  
Do  
the crackling of our bones remind you of the times where you were assembled ?  
Where



you became of chain  
How  
they snapped each piece of metal to form you?  
Is  
that why you continue to hold us captive?  
Because  
you find shelter in our pain  
And  
comfort in our sobs

You  
welded our bodies in hope to oppress us  
But  
we'll show you how to make good use of chains  
We'l  
play tug of war with your slave ships  
And  
drag you back to where you belong  
We'll  
wear you as medallion  
We'll  
tie you around our fists and show you what black power looks like  
What  
makes you think you can keep us hostage  
We're  
used to this metal  
We  
ripped bullets out of our bodies  
And  
Bent the metal behind bars  
Our  
Bond be bigger than bondage  
We  
learn to protect our own  
We  
be the chain gang that infests mass incarceration i  
Our  
bodies,

have  
gotten used to this,  
from  
chains  
to  
bars  
Our  
bodies,  
have  
gotten used to this,  
from  
chains  
to  
bars

And  
there Ain't no way you gon break us apart.



The Providence College Black Studies Program is proud to announce its second annual commemoration of Dearly Beloved. Dearly Beloved is an annual commemoration initiated by Dr. Julia Jordan-Zachery and Dr. Viviane Saleh-Hanna, two Black mothers in New England who are also professors concentrating in Black Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Political Science, and Crime and Justice Studies.

The purpose of Dearly Beloved is to memorialize and honor the children, women, and men of color who have been murdered as a result of government-inflicted violence.

Local intergenerational artists will collectively paint the portraits of thirty-three (33) local and national victims of government-inflicted violence. These thirty-three (33) men, women, and children were between the ages of twelve (12) and fifty-eight (58) at the time of their brutal, untimely, and unjustifiable death. The portraits will be printed on cloth, and a group of local mothers, daughters, and grandmothers of color will sew them into a large quilt.

The Providence College Black Studies Program will host a memorialization event in which both the thirty-three (33) painted portraits and the quilt featuring the sewn prints will be displayed. The artists and the quilters will be present during the memorialization event. The purpose of this event is to come together as a community to remember and honor those who have lost their lives.

# Brown Skinned Beauty

I grew up in a time where little back girls weren't pretty enough.  
I remember attending my white catholic school with my two inch braids steaming from my head  
Hair short and stumpy from a fresh cut I never asked for.  
These small girls looking at me funny.  
I didn't know why.  
I felt like an insect  
Slowly dissected by the observing white eye.  
I never grew out of that phase, the observation phase...  
That school taught me I wasn't beautiful, Television taught me that nobody would love me,  
And society taught me I'd have to change my look, my attitude, and my skin to be loved in this life.  
The first man I ever loved, told me I wasn't being myself.  
He told me that he knew I wasn't as "white washed" as I pretended to be.  
He made me feel ashamed.  
Ashamed that I had assimilated into a culture of people who just wanted to be like me.  
Ambitious.  
Proud.  
Oriented.  
And most of all...  
BLACK.  
So the first time, I found a white man interested in me,  
I over compensated.  
I found the need to prove to myself exactly why I couldn't love him  
Why he was no good for me...  
Why his history contradicted my own.  
Then when I fell for him, I made ever excuse as to why he was different, the exception, not the rule.  
I believed him when he said "I love black girls" and forced myself not to believe it was a fetish--  
Even though that's exactly what it was.  
You see, society has an interesting way of making the best of us feel broken.  
Misunderstood.  
Lost.  
It has taken so long to say so very confidently that I love the skin I am in.  
I love the rough texture of my brown hair.  
I love the kinky curls of my roots.

And the glow of my soft skin.

I am proud.

I am strong.

I am independently grown and loved.

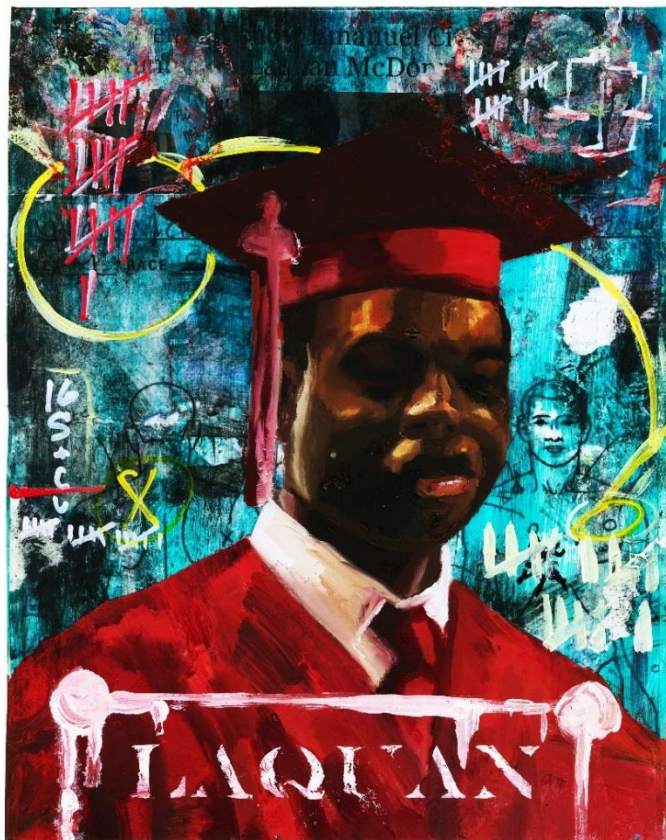
I am a young, intellectual Black Woman growing up in a time where loving “me” is a constant, never-ending  
battle between myself...

And society.

And yes, I prosper anyway.

# Laquan MacDonald

September 25, 1997 – October 20, 2014 (17 years old)



**How did you first hear about the Dearly Beloved project?**

Outreach by Dr. Jordan-Zachery.

**What was your motivation behind participating in this project?**

My artistic practice has always been rooted in social justice collaboration, so it was a perfect fit.

**Who did you paint? Why?**

I painted Laquan MacDonald. There are a number of reasons why - quickly, he was from my hometown of Chicago and killed by Chicago PD, his murder was at the center of a huge political scandal for the city's mayor, linking political corruption with black death, and all of the photos of him online are extremely grainy, low quality, and I thought painting him was a way of restoring some of his visibility and full humanness.

**Did you conduct research on the victim before you started the painting? If so, what was that experience like?**

Yes, there is very little public record on his personal life, which deeply informed the content of the piece.

**What has collaborating in the Dearly Beloved project meant to you?**

It's an opportunity to lend support to an excellent campaign in the name of black lives, so it's been wonderful.

**Were there any changes in your views, ideas, perceptions, from the time you started this project to the time you finished?**

Anything of this nature works to cement your artistic practice in the lived experience, which is always changing.

*Jordan Seaberry is a local artist. To see more of his work, please visit: [www.jordanseaberry.com](http://www.jordanseaberry.com)*



# For a Black Girl

I wrote you a letter when I was in 5th grade.  
I was scared and for the first time in a long time, i needed some help  
I wrote to you through my tears and past my pain to ask for advice.

How do you respond when someone tells you that you are “pretty for a black girl?”

Do you cringe at the insensitivity of the comment?  
Or do you allow the floor to swallow you whole?  
Allowing you to make a graceful escape before your facade of confidence shatters in front of the very  
demon that stole your security.

I guess you never really got that letter because, i never heard back.

So the second time someone told me i was pretty for a black girl i said “thank you” for i had decided  
that my mocha skin would not be a curse against me but rather a source of comfort..

Until i realized that by this added conjunction, “for a black girl” I was no longer in the category of  
beautiful reserved for white woman.,  
I allowed myself to sink so deeply into the abyss of painful defeat that i forgot about the radiance of  
my melanin.

So the third time, someone told me i was “pretty for a black girl”, i simply replied,  
there is no  
for  
but  
or  
specificity needed,  
for my melanin speaks volumes.  
For its caramelized elegance does not need an audience to feel, beautiful.

# George Stinney

October 21, 1929 – June 16, 1944 (14 years old)



## **How did you first hear about the Dearly Beloved project?**

I believe Laura Montgomery from Bunker Hill Community College told me of this.

## **What was your motivation behind participating in this project?**

African American stories need to be told, drawn and written about. Much of my own work centers on that.

## **Who did you paint? Why?**

George Stinney. Because he never got a fair trial or justice. His story should be told 70 plus years later.

## **Did you conduct research on the victim before you started the painting? If so, what was that experience like?**

Yes. I had known about him and it was heartbreaking that it took 70 years for an exoneration that came decades late.

## **What has collaborating in the Dearly Beloved project meant to you?**

Being a part of something bigger than me. It was an honor to participate.

## **Were there any changes in your views, ideas, perceptions, from the time you started this project to the time you finished?**

No. They are consistent. Our stories must be told.

*Shea Justice is a local artist.*

*To see more of his work, please visit: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-L7nBMEzo4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-L7nBMEzo4)*

# The Collaborative for the Research on Black Women and Girls

The Collaborative for the Research on Black Women and Girls is a multidisciplinary research group that centers the experiences of Black women and girls. It is interested in exploring the diverse lived realities of Black women and girls across varied geographical and social locations. The purpose of the group is to explore the ways in which Black womanhood and girlhood intersects and interacts with other social categories such as nationality, religion, class, sexuality, etc. The Collaborative also seeks to support scholars who engage in research on Black women and girls, and develop practical ways to bring the knowledges of Black women and girls into the classroom and other critical spaces.

Historically, Black women and girls have used their voices to critique society and to offer a vision of society that is more just and equitable. They constitute a significant percent of the labor force and voting public, and they have been key organizers of the “modern” Civil Rights Movement and the more recent #BlackLivesMatter movement. Yet, Black girls and women remain particularly understudied and are often rendered invisible in socio-economic and cultural understandings of their role in not only the Black community, but also the larger community. This Collaborative centers their knowledge production by offering a space for scholars and community activists to critically engage knowledge produced by Black girls and women.



*2017 Black Women & Girls Symposium*

# To The White Man Who Tried to Love Me

To the man who tried to love me.

I'm sorry.

I am sorry that i let my fears get the best of me

I am sorry that i allowed myself to pull you in and never let you in

I am sorry.

Sorry that at night when we'd spend time together and you'd look at my face

Distance was all you'd feel

I am sorry that when you asked me why i was so distant i told you it was because i didn't trust you, but not that it was really because i couldn't trust you.

To the man who tried to love me,

I am sorry that my hair is so important and that my chocolate skin was never something i could really love

Im sorry that i let you believe that the love you gave me could not be enough.

I did love you.

I just couldn't let you love me...

To the man who tried to love me,

I didn't know it would be so hard

To love you was to forget about all my chocolate boys and pick you

To love you was to teach you why box braids were so much easier than the nappy hair you loved.

To the white man who tried to love me, I'm sorry.

I loved you too.

And I still do.

# Christian Taylor

October 13, 1995 – August 7, 2015 (19 years old)



## **How did you first hear about the Dearly Beloved project?**

Heard of it since its last year's exhibition of Dearly Beloved where it took place in Dartmouth.

## **What was your motivation behind participating in this project?**

I believe that police brutality is definitely an ongoing problem in society, especially for minorities. My motivation was the fact that my art would be raising awareness of an important issue still currently going in society today.

## **Who did you paint? Why?**

I painted Christian Taylor a young Black boy that was killed unjustly and whose death has not been dealt with justice. I painted him because his story touched me and can represent many people his age that have suffered due to discrimination.

## **Did you conduct research on the victim before you started the painting? If so, what was that experience like?**

I conducted some research in order to know who Christian Taylor was and who cared for him. The experience felt heartbreaking, the pain expressed by his loved ones alone motivated me to paint him - to paint him with all his colors.

## **What has collaborating in the Dearly Beloved project meant to you?**

To me it's meant more than just artist activism but also giving voice to those whose voice have been taken.

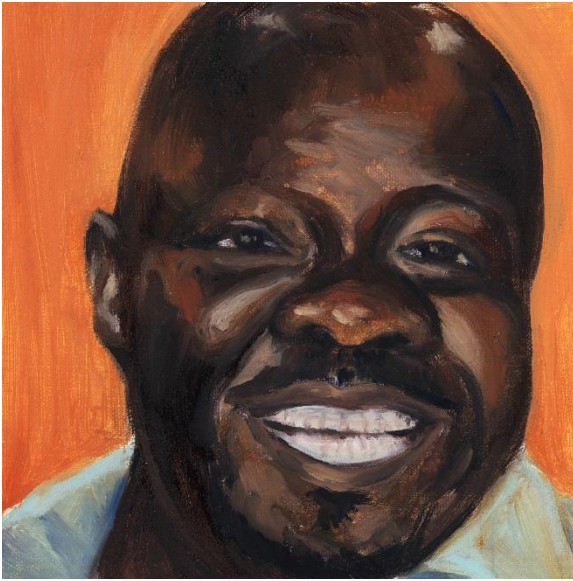
## **Were there any changes in your views, ideas, perceptions, from the time you started this project to the time you finished?**

This was the first portrait I have done in the Dearly Beloved series that has been more conceptual with the additions of postmodern elements. I took an artistic risk by putting a bandaid\* over his mouth, some can see it as inconsiderate towards his life, but I see it as an intentional and important artistic choice. The act itself represents what society does to victims like Christian; silence them and see it as something you can easily fix or move on like a bandaid placed on the person to "elevate" the pain. But we won't be silenced. *\*The bandaid was removed for the quilt.*

*Danilo Martinez is a local artist.*



# Dara Bayer on Dearly Beloved



*Alfred Olango*

*July 29, 1978 – September 27, 2016 (38 years old)*

As a visual artist concerned with creating a just world, I have always struggled with how my creative work could make concrete social change. I often wonder about the role of political art in our collective human journey for liberation. While this is an ongoing exploration, I have found some important understandings through my collaborations with the Dearly Beloved project, conceived by Dr. Viviane Saleh-Hanna and Dr. Julia Jordan-Zacchary in 2014.

I heard of Dearly Beloved while it was still in the creative womb, before it was a fully formed idea. My close friend, Viviane, shared about her desire to respond to the devastating murder of Trayvon Martin, and the subsequent acquittal of his

murderer, George Zimmerman; she talked about her and Julia as Black mothers and scholars, and their interest in creating an alternative space for justice and healing that honored Black and Indigenous people whose lives were taken from state sanctioned violence. This vision included memorializing each individual through painted portraits and then creating a quilt in the Afrikan and Afrikan American tradition of recording history and preserving culture. The portraits and quilt were then part of a mass memorial service in which all the individuals honored were eulogized in October of 2015 at UMass Dartmouth.

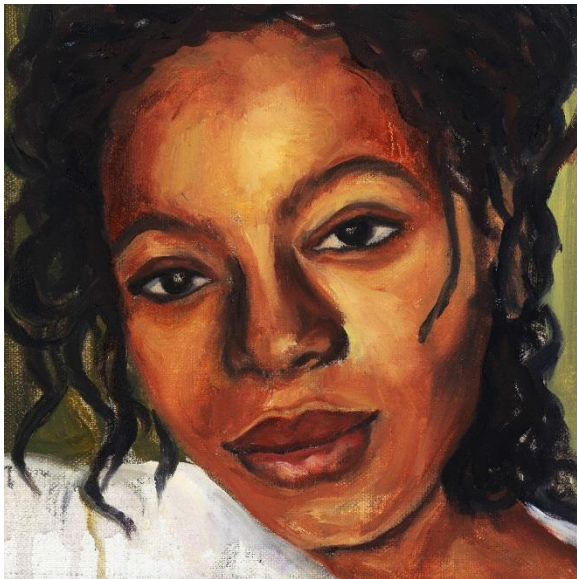
After our initial discussion, I was moved to paint a portrait of Darrien Hunt, a young man who was murdered by police in Utah for carrying a toy Samurai sword. He reminded me so much of how I imagine my brother to look as a young adult; I was and continue to be haunted by the fact that all the Black men and boys I love dearly, my father, my brother, my friends, are vulnerable to police violence and murder in this country. As the project further took form, I ended up helping to coordinate artists of color across all ages to create portraits of 31 different individuals, ages 7 to 107, who were tragically killed by state sanctioned violence. I also had the privilege of painting the image that became the centerpiece of the quilt: a portrait that represented the countless unknown and unnamed Black and Indigenous people who have lost their lives through colonial and white supremacist policies and practices. In the second iteration of the project, which is currently happening in Providence,



I also had the opportunity to memorialize Kendra James, Manuel Loggins Jr. and Alfred Olango. With each painting, I worked to capture the infinitely complex humanity of each person; each brush stroke was an invocation of their spirit, an honoring of their role as ancestor in our current reality.

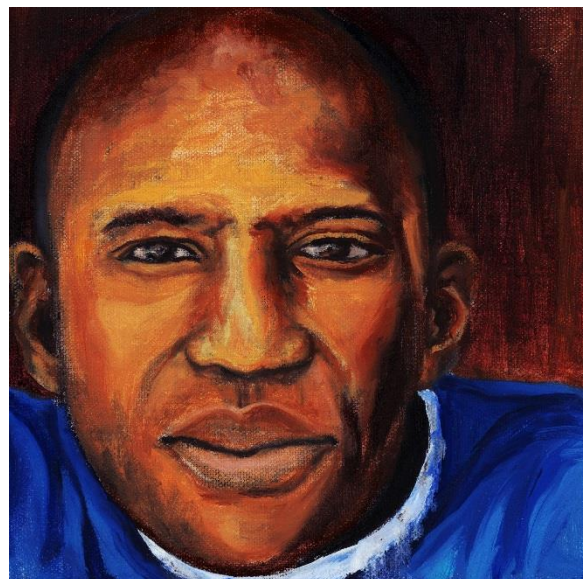
The artistic work that came out of this project was a powerful reminder that engaging in a creative process to address systemic injustice carves out space for new possibilities. The creation of the

portraits and the quilt allowed each artist to bring forth the lives of each individual whose humanity was not recognized by those meant to serve and protect. Stitched into the quilt is the love and care that can offer a healing balm for those impacted by this senseless violence; it is also a site of consciousness raising, a reminder that we all must collectively work to create a world where our descendants can live self-determined lives free of white supremacist violence.



Kendra James

December 24, 1981 – May 5, 2003 (21 years old)



Manuel Loggins Jr.

February 22, 1980 – February 7, 2012 (31 years old)

*Dara Bayer is a local artist.*

*To see more of her work, please visit: [www.imaniarts.com](http://www.imaniarts.com)*

# CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2018

*Adriel Antoine*

*Delina Auciello*

*Brianna Frias*

*Courtney Krakowski*

*Kristen Rezuke*

*Deneysha Riley*

*Onassis Valerio*

*Abigail Wolf*

**BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM**

**2018 AWARDS**

**The Mary McLeod Bethune Award for Academic Excellence**

The Mary McLeod Bethune Award recognizes academic and scholarly achievement by a Black Studies graduating senior who embodies the academic vigor of Mary McLeod Bethune. Candidates for this award have significantly contributed, in terms of academics and scholarship, to the intellectual discourses of African and African American Diasporic research and praxis.

**2018 Recipient – Courtney Krakowski** –Mary McLeod Behune—Academic Excellence

**The Amílcar Cabral Freedom Award**

The Amílcar Cabral Freedom Award recognizes a Black Studies minor graduating senior who has promoted the principles of Black Studies through leadership. The recipient displays a deep commitment to social justice and has shown an ability to transform this commitment into effective action while at Providence College.

**2018 Recipient – Adriel Antoine** –Amicar Cabral—Activism/Student leadership



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to sincerely thank Dr. William Hogan, Associate Professor of English and Director of the Center for Engaged Learning, for the support and financial contribution in the production of the Heritage Journal. We also recognize the coalition who is seeking to make our community more just and equitable. May the Demands be met. Lastly, we would like to thank the following artists and quilters of Dearly Beloved:

### ARTISTS

Celina Lopes	Sila Assad
Danilo Martinez	Dara Bayer
Jessica Miller	Kelvin Faial
Brunilda Miranda	Cameron Farias
Esther Mulamba	Kedrin Alexander Frias
Leslie Oquendo	Susan Garland
Denzel Rodriguez	Brianna Gomes
Yalitsa Rodriguez	Alex Jackson
De'Autre Russell	Shea Justice
Jordan Seaberry	Juwan Kilgore
Ty'Relle Stephens	Ainsley Lawson
Shanea Volino	

### QUILTERS

Shirla Auguste	Brunilda Miranda
Kendra Brewster	Christle Rawlins-Jackson
Priscilla Carrion	Lesyslie Rackard
Claudia Espaillat	Susi Ryan
Dana Heng	Gina Ryan
Trinice Holden	Viviane Saleh-Hanna
Julia Jordan-Zachery	Dania Sanchez
Dakeilyn Kollie	Lo Smith
Sandra Lopez-Naz	Edmicelly Xavier
Isha McCauley	

## CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite our scholarly community—students, faculty, staff, alum and community members to contribute to Heritage. Our theme for the AY 2018-19 is “Freedom in a Beloved Community: What Does that Mean to You?”. Pieces can take multiple forms such as art, poetry or prose; they can be reflective or analytical. We do ask that all submission be no more than 400 words. Submissions to be sent to [black.studies@providence.edu](mailto:black.studies@providence.edu) no later than February 15, 2019. We are also calling on the artist among us to help us design our next cover. Thanks in advance for your contribution.



**BLACK STUDIES PROGRAM**